

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks on Infrastructure Improvement Efforts in New York City**  
*January 31, 2023*

Hello, hello, hello. Please have a seat, if you have one.

Well, thank you. Chuck, thanks for that introduction. That was worth the trip. *[Laughter]* Thank you, really. Thank you very much.

And look, one person in particular who pushed relentlessly for the—advance this Gateway Program and improve rail transit in the region. I don't know how many times I've heard from Chuck about this project. *[Laughter]* Time and time and time again.

He didn't let anything stop him because he knows how incredibly critical it is to people's lives and the strength of the economy of New York and New Jersey and, quite frankly, all across the country. And that's Chuck Schumer. He's relentless. He never gives up.

No one has done more to make today a reality. And it's truly—this is Chuck Schumer Day, pal. *[Laughter]* You got it done. Chuck, you've done a hell of a job. And a big thanks to the rest of the delegation as well.

Senator Gillibrand, who's here—a true champion of this State and who always puts New York first. And she makes sure everybody in the military is straightened up too, but that's a different story.

Mayor Adams, thank you for—where's Mayor Adams? There you are, Mayor. Good to see you, pal. Thank you for the passport into the city. I—and, Governor Hochul, thank you as well. We got a chance to speak a little bit earlier.

And, Governor Murphy, it's been a great—you've been a great friend a long time, and your leadership has been vital to this project.

And the New Jersey congressional delegation fought like hell to push forward what this—all this entails. And I want to thank everybody here. I want to thank Bob Menendez. Where are you, Bob? There you are. Good to see you, Bob. And Cory Booker. Two great Senators from New Jersey.

And I also want to—you know, we tried to shut down—while others tried to shut this work down, we made clear—I made clear this is a national priority. And I told you that we'd get this done, and we did it together.

I want to thank Representative Gottheimer, as well, and the two members of New Jersey Congress—congressional delegation, Rob Menendez, who's smarter than his dad—*[laughter]*—and Don [Dan; White House correction] Goldman—I know because my son was smarter than I was, so—look, for being here. We've got a lot of work to do to, and we've got a lot of work to get together.

You're going to pay for that when you get home, right? *[Laughter]*

But look—and I want to thank everyone from Amtrak. Everyone from Amtrak. You guys—and MTA is up there too. I see that. For—this Gateway Development Commission is really important, and I thank you for your partnership.

Folks, just outside this space, the first piece of the new Hudson Tunnel is being built. It's one of the biggest parts of the Gateway Program. Now, let me say this at the outset: This is just the

beginning—just the beginning—of finally constructing a 21st-century rail system that's long, long overdue in this country.

This project is critical to transforming the Northeast Corridor, increasing speeds, capacity, reliability, and safety. In addition to getting folks out of cars and onto trains, we're going to help the environment as well, because we're going to—all the studies show—and I've been harping on this since the early—mid-seventies—that every study shows: If you can get from point A to point B on rail as fast or faster than you can in an automobile, you don't take the car. You get in the train.

And that's how important this project is for up to 200,000 passengers who take Amtrak or New Jersey Transit under the Hudson River every single day. And you know, it matters a lot: the Northeast Corridor from here to Boston, Boston to Washington, all the way down.

For years, people talked about fixing this tunnel. But thanks to the leadership of Chuck in the bipartisan infrastructure law, we're finally getting this done. This law is the most significant investment in rail—the most significant investment in rail—since we created Amtrak over 50 years ago. And billions—billions—are going to projects along the Northeast Corridor, including replacing the existing Hudson Tunnel. That's why it's so important.

Two thousand two hundred trains—2,200 trains—run along the Northeast Corridor every single day. It's the busiest corridor in the United States of America and one of the busiest in the world. And the problem—a problem anywhere along the line means delays up and down the East Coast for folks trying to get to work, businesses trying to ship goods, travelers trying to get to see their families.

And by the way, as a U.S. Senator, I commuted, for 36 years, every single, solitary day the Senate was in session. I traveled over 1,100,000 miles on Amtrak. And I can tell you where all the delays were. [*Laughter*] And they weren't all in Wilmington, Delaware.

So I know it to be a fact. If this line shuts down for just 1 day, it would cost the American economy \$100 million a day, in cost. The current Hudson River rail tunnel can be a major choke point, a critical link to New York Penn Station, the busiest train station in all of America.

This tunnel opened for business in two—in 1910, 113 year ago. And the structure is literally deteriorating. The roof is leaking. The floor is sinking. Plus, it was badly damaged by Superstorm Sandy. I was the Vice President then. I came and walked through this tunnel. You ought to see it. Today, over 10 years later, there's still remnants of seawater in the tunnel, eating away at the concrete, the steel, and the electrical components within the tunnel.

In 2020, there were over 12,000 minutes in delay in just 1 year—12,000 minutes of delay. The United States of America. What—for God's sake, what are we doing? This is the United States of America. We know better. We're so much brighter than that. And now we're going to prove it.

We're going to rebuild the existing tunnel. But we can't do that until we build a brandnew, entirely second—an entirely different and separate tunnel. You can't fix the first—old first one without building the new one. And it's—that tunnel is going to—you're going to run at faster speeds with no interruptions—it will be running at 100 miles an hour—while the original tunnel is under construction. And that will mean fewer delays, less risk and major—of major shutdowns.

The new tunnel is going to have two tubes with one track in each tube so that you can keep operating even if one side breaks down. But it's going to be safer, more resilient, more reliable, and the biggest rail line in the United States of America.

And to get it done, as a first step, we're completing the concrete casing under the Hudson Yards, as Chuck referenced, which Chuck has been talking and talking and talking—[*laughter*]—

and talking and talking about. Hudson Yards sits above where the new tunnel will connect to Penn Station. This is a critical step for everything else we're going to do in the Corridor and rail, period.

As you may know, work started in Hudson Yards site in 2013, but stalled due to lack of funding. But thanks to the—and I emphasize the "bipartisan" infrastructure law, we now have the money, and we're finally going to get it done. When the project is complete, trains will be in and out of New York more quickly, more safely, and with fewer interruptions.

This is only one part though of the overall Gateway Program to improve train travel between New York and New Jersey. For example, last year, we also broke ground on the Portal North Bridge, Gov—you and I—in New Jersey. And thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law, we're rebuilding two other critical bridges, Saw-Tooth and Docks [Dock; White House correction] Bridge, both in North Jersey.

All told, this is one of the biggest and most consequential projects in the country. But it's going to take time. It's a multibillion-dollar effort between the States and the Federal Government. But we finally have the money, and we're going to get it done. I promise you, we're going to get it done.

And, folks, we're making similar investments to improve rail up and down the Northeast Corridor. Yesterday I was in Baltimore for a similar announcement at the Baltimore and Potomac Tunnel, another critical junction that was built nearly 150 years ago. No changes in 150 years.

I walked through that sucker too. *[Laughter]* No, you think I'm joking; I'm not. Man, this has been—when you—when you commute on a highway every single day—and that was my highway—you get interested in when things are too old or things are falling apart.

And over the next 2 years, we're going to hit milestones of other rail projects, including the East River Tunnel here in New York, the Susquehanna Bridge in Maryland, the Connecticut River Bridge. And we're not stopping at all—this with rail.

Earlier this month, I was in Kentucky with the Republican leader. We're spending over a billion dollars on the Brent Spence Bridge, over the Ohio and Kentucky River, they've been trying to fix for years and years. We're repairing the original bridge and building an entirely new one parallel to it.

You know, over that bridge, today—which keeps breaking down—trucks carry roughly \$2 billion worth of freight goods every single day across that bridge now, from Florida to Canada. The bridge was built 60 years ago. Folks have been talking about fixing it for decades, but now we're going to get it done.

And there's more that we're doing. For example, up in the Bronx, we're redeveloping the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market, which handles 60 percent of New York's fruits and vegetables. Sixty percent. We're expanding refrigerated warehouse space, installing charging stations for electric vehicles so delivery trucks can get in and out faster and recharge and return—for the return trip.

On Staten Island, we're upgrading the port at the Kill—at Arthur Kill terminal site to turn it into a state-of-the-art assembly site for wind turbines. By the way, just one blade of these new wind turbines is 102 yards long. A hundred and two yards long.

The ships carrying this equipment are huge, so we're dredging a 35-foot basin so the ships can reach the site. Now, with the support of the Governor of New Jersey, we're reconstituting nearly 3 miles of highway that's now structurally obsolete, leading to the Port of Camden. And we're repairing Point Pleasant Canal and Cape May Canal, critical waterways for two communities that are gems of the New Jersey Shore.

And one of the things—one of the things—about the infrastructure law that I'm most excited about is we're doing all of this with all American workers. All American workers. And by the way, and all of it—all of it—is union labor. All of it. Every freaking one, union labor. You all thing I'm kidding? I'm not.

Yesterday, in Baltimore, I announced that we're building that project under the new project labor agreement. And we're making sure there is one of these projects as well here. The agreement to contractors and unions to put in place an agreement before construction begins to ensure major projects are handled with well-trained, highly skilled union workers that resolve disputes ahead of time, ensuring safer work sites, avoiding disruptions and work stoppages that can cause expensive and extensive delays down the line.

So we're not just—this is not just good for workers, it's good for taxpayers too.

Amtrak and the Building Trades have agreed that a project labor agreement will be in place across the major rail construction projects up and down—up and down—the Northeast Corridor.

And the Hudson River Tunnel project will lead to 72,000 good-paying jobs over its lifetime: laborers, electricians, carpenters, cement masons, ironworkers, operating engineers, and more. Good jobs you can raise a family on, and most don't require a college degree. But they do require 4 years of apprenticeships, training programs. It's one of the reasons why the United States has the best trained workers in the world. No, that's not hyperbole. We do.

Everybody thinks if you want to join the IBEW, you just show up, you're going to be an electrician. After 4 years at an apprenticeship, maybe. So you guys are the best in the world. You really are.

And that's what this project and others like it across the country are all about: making investments in America's cities and towns, in America's heartlands, and the rural areas as well.

It's about making things here in America again. It's about good jobs. It's about the dignity of work. My dad used to say, "Joey, it"—it's the God's truth—he'd say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity." It's about respect. It's about being able to turn and look your kid in the eye and say, "Honey, it's going to be okay" and mean it. And he meant it. And it's about respect and self-worth.

And, folks, it's about damn time. For too long we've talked about asserting American leadership, once again building the best economy in the world.

But, to have the best economy in the world, you have to have the best infrastructure in the world. People don't build factories where there are not rail stations, where there are not ports, where there are not access to highways. They don't attract businesses unless you have the best infrastructure to get products to market, to create thousands of good-paying jobs.

For most of the last century, our economy led the world by a significant margin because we invested in our people and we invested in ourselves. We invested in research and development in America. We used to invest two-tenths of 1 percent—two—[inaudible]—2 percent of our GDP in research and development. That's what we did 40 years ago. It's down to 0.7 percent.

Along the way, we stopped. We used to rank number one in the world in research and development. Now we rank number nine. The United States is number nine, and China is number eight. Now they rank number two. Folks, we risk losing the edge as a nation, and China and the rest of the world are catching up.

For decades, the backbone of America has been the middle class, and it's been hollowed out. Too many good-paying manufacturing jobs moved overseas because labor was cheap over there.

We exported jobs and imported their products. It may have helped the corporate bottom line, but it didn't help many Americans.

When jobs moved overseas, factories at home closed down. Once-thriving cities and towns became shadows of what they used to be, and they lost a sense of their self-worth along the way. And when those towns were hollowed out, something else was lost: pride, self-esteem, a sense of self-worth.

These are the efforts of the so-called trickle-down economics, the view from Park Avenue that says the wealthy and maybe—help them and maybe it will trickle down to everyone else.

But there's another view, the one that I hold, that the majority of the people hold, I think, like the folks in the city where I was born, in Scranton, or the town I was raised, in Claymont, Delaware. They view America's workers as ready to work hard as hell, given an even shot. They just need the shot though.

They get up every morning and go to work and bust their necks trying to make an honest living. Looks, folk, I've said it many times: Wall Street is important, but it didn't build this country. The middle class built the country. And unions built the middle class. I mean it.

When I ran for President, I agreed that we were going to build from the bottom up and the middle out to bring back good-paying jobs you can raise a family on, whether or not you went to college; to give families more breathing room to invest in ourselves again, invest in America again. And that's what we've done.

In my first 2 years in office, the 2 strongest years of job growth on record in the entire history of the United States of America. We've created nearly 11 million—11 million—jobs, including 750,000 manufacturing jobs in 2 years. And we're just getting started.

Where the hell is it written that say America can't lead the world again in manufacturing? Where is that written? In addition, we have private major investment totaling \$300 billion in just one industry—one industry—semiconductors, generating significant job opportunities, American manufacturing. For four decades, we imported products and exported jobs. Now America is exporting products and creating jobs.

Although there's much more to do about what we're going to do to modernize the modern rail, let me close with this. The Americans see these projects popping up across the country, and it sends an important message: that we're going to—when we work together, like we did in the bipartisan law, in the CHIPS law, there's nothing we can't do. Nothing.

When in the hell has America ever, ever, ever set a goal that it didn't reach? When has it ever? Name me a time. Name me a time when America has gone through a crunch and didn't come out stronger on the other side than it went in.

We can get really big things done. We're sort of losing confidence in ourselves. We can do anything. We really can. We can move this Nation forward. We can send another message as well: a message of pride—pride in our country; pride in what we can do together; a sense of self-worth, knowing you can provide for your family.

As I've long said, it's been a really bad bet to bet against America. And I can honestly say, as I stand here today, and I give you my word as a Biden, I've never been more optimistic about America's prospects in my entire life. We just have to remember who the hell we are. We are the United States of America. There's nothing beyond our capacity. Nothing at all. And it's starting right here.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. at the John D. Caemmerer West Side Storage Yard. In his remarks, he referred to Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer; Gov. Philip D. Murphy of New Jersey; Mario Menendez, father of Sen. Robert Menendez; and Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Infrastructure improvement efforts in New York City.

*Locations:* New York City.

*Names:* Adams, Eric; Booker, Cory A.; Gillibrand, Kirsten E.; Goldman, Daniel S.; Gottheimer, Joshua S.; Hochul, Kathleen C.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Menendez, Mario; Menendez, Robert; Murphy, Philip D.; Schumer, Charles E.

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